













# BY MUTUAL CONSENT.

BY J. MARSDEN SUTCLIFFE.  
AUTHOR OF "THE ROYAL ROMANCE OF AN INSURANCE OFFICE."  
REVISED BY THE AUTHOR.  
[Now First Published.]

## CHAPTER XVII.

Alas! life's path may be unsmoothed. The way may be rough and distant. Then who her path and pain will smooth, the sorrow that she has to bear, the grief that she must have, the child when that villain Denon tricked her into a marriage with him. Think of her position—a friendless girl, left alone in a foreign city, without a soul to look to except the bond who basely used her advantage as her appointed guardian to impose on her innocence and enslave her to his ruinous name and reputation.

The speaker was Claude Maclean, who was explaining to Lady Falcour, who with instant warmth on the wrongs of the deeply injured wife of Sir Reginald Denon, who spoke from the breakfast-room of Claude's residence on Campden Hill.

It was a terrible blow to Claude Maclean when he made the unexpected discovery of Winifred's marriage. But his sorrow over his vanished dream of happiness was swallowed up by his anxiety occasioned by Winifred's flight, and the uncertainty that hung over her fate.

His anxiety became aggravated when several days elapsed without bringing any tidings to allay his fears. Hence Lady Falcour, rising between the two ladies, and looking at her for any information communicated by Winifred, whilst at Glen-Orchard that might tend to throw light on her probable place of retreat, hastened to Kensington to hear from her in the great trouble that had befallen him.

"It is a very pitiful story," said Lady Falcour, "and I feel very sorry for Winifred, but it is most curious that she should have done this."

"Don't trouble yourself about me, mother," cried Claude impulsively. "I only wish to hear of her. Help me to find her, and then I shall be from the possession of a sounder. I ask no more than that."

"But I must think of you," said Lady Falcour, "with a warm place of affection. I will quite give up my life for you, and I am a widow. You are not one to forget quickly."

"No, mother, I shall never forget," said Claude with mournful emphasis. "You will tell me that I ought to love and forget her, and I am not one to forget quickly."

"I do not esteem you less because you cannot quickly change," said Lady Falcour, after a pause. "but I must think of what is most for you."

"That is soon settled," cried Claude. "When I know that Winifred is safely sheltered I shall learn how to bear my disappointment. I shall find a solace in my grief, and I shall find that she is safe, but while this anxiety continues I am too distressed to think of anything beside her."

"If I could only believe that," said Lady Falcour, "I would tell you that I am sure of it. I am sure that you would be satisfied to know that Winifred was with me. I would willingly say to you, when you had seen her, that she was safe, and ask her to make her home with me at Glen-Orchard."

"That is all I want. When once she is placed out of my reach, I am able to live my life in her own way I shall be satisfied."

"But you could not come to Glen-Orchard if she were there," said Lady Falcour.

"Why not? What is to hinder me coming?" exclaimed Claude, hotly. "You have taught me to despise the conventionalities of an artificial society, and I mean to do so. We can be friends, I suppose."

"The position would be one of danger to both," said Lady Falcour.

"I think so too," said Claude. "You can accompany me, I suppose?"

"If I must, I will go," said Lady Falcour. "But I must go to the bank to see the money that I have deposited there. I will go to the bank to see the money that I have deposited there. I will go to the bank to see the money that I have deposited there."

"A Monsieur please," said Lady Falcour, "I am entirely at your service. I will go to the bank to see the money that I have deposited there. I will go to the bank to see the money that I have deposited there. I will go to the bank to see the money that I have deposited there."

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**BUSINESS ANNOUNCEMENTS.**  
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**SHIPPING IN PORT.**  
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